

Call for Volunteers

Entry level meteorological positions within the National Weather Service have become extremely competitive over the past several years. In the past, it has been beneficial for students to have prior NWS experience when applying for a position. In order to help prospective meteorologists gain such experience, the NWS forecast office in Bismarck has developed a student volunteer program. The goal of this program is to allow high school and college students either interested in, or currently enrolled in meteorology to gain invaluable work experience within an NWS forecast office. Many current NWS employees participated in similar programs themselves when they were students, and remain grateful for the experience. For this reason they understand how beneficial such programs can be, and they are eager to return the favor. This is true even if a student ends up not working for the National Weather Service.

Student Volunteer Service

The National Weather Service office in Bismarck is currently taking applications for student volunteers through the Student Volunteer Service. This program offers unpaid training opportunities to current high school and college students. As a student volunteer, you will gain work experience related to a career in meteorology/hydrology. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to explore your career options and to develop both professional and personal skills.

Student volunteer selections for the upcoming summer season will be made locally at NWS Bismarck. Factors for selection as a student volunteer may include:

- Number of students we can handle at one time
- Year in school, and amount of coursework completed
- Academic record
- Activities outside of class (clubs, teams, volunteer work, etc.)
- Whether the student has previously volunteered with the NWS
- United States citizenship
- Status as a current student (required)
- Prior volunteer experience

Work hours for Student Volunteers

We understand that student volunteers have many other commitments, including their academic work and perhaps paid employment. For this reason we are flexible about the specific hours that a student works as a volunteer, though we generally ask that student volunteers average between 5 and 15 hours per week during the summer season. We also recommend that students try to work most of their time during normal business hours, Monday through Friday.

A student will spend their work time on a variety of activities. These will include, but not be limited to:

- Becoming familiar with Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) software, NOAA Weather Radio, and various other NWS computer systems.
- Shadowing forecasters on the public and aviation weather desks.
- Taking upper air observations.
- Performing quality control on various weather and hydrologic information.
- Contributing to administrative and/or research projects.

Earning college credit as a volunteer

Students may wish to check with their college or university about earning credit toward graduation for the time they spend volunteering. Specific policies vary by institution. For example, some schools may require the student to work more than 8 hours per week in order to earn credit. Otherwise it does not matter to the NWS whether a student is volunteering for credit or not.

Rules and regulations for volunteers

The National Weather Service, as an agency of the United States Department of Commerce (DOC), is bound by the laws, policies, guidelines, and procedures regarding voluntary and uncompensated services as summarized in [DOC Administrative Order 202-311](#). This is important information for potential volunteers. For example, Section 2.03.d in this document explains the citizenship requirements for volunteers: "If an agency may not hire citizens of a particular country, citizens of that country may not serve as student volunteers." Also note the Student Volunteer Agreement at the bottom of that document. The first point requires that: "The student is enrolled at least half time at an accredited school, is recommended by the school, and is acceptable to the agency."

Applying for a student volunteer position at NWS Bismarck

If you are interested in applying, please send an email with your contact information (name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address) to Joshua.Scheck@noaa.gov. An application packet will then be mailed to you. The packet can take a week to complete because of fingerprinting and school enrollment verification requirements, so be sure to allow ample time to apply. This application must be filled out and returned to our office by Friday April 30. If you do not have access to email, you may call Becky Selzler at 701-250-4224 to request an application packet.

NWS-Bismarck Volunteer Program Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone #: _____

E-mail Address: _____

School: _____

Advisor: _____

Advisor Phone #: _____

Classification/Grade Level: _____

GPA: _____

Proposed Volunteer Dates: _____

Career Goals: _____

Advisor Email Address/Phone #: _____ / _____

Additional information you would like us to know about you (clubs, teams, volunteer work, ect):
